February 28, 2021

The following is my written testimony.

My name is Beth Gardner, I am the mother of a dyslexic child and I reside in Fairfield, CT.

I fully support HB 6517, to implement the recommendations of the Dyslexia Task Force, to provide the necessary framework, guidance and accountability to support dyslexia legislation implementation.

My daughter is in seventy grade and she is dyslexic. Even though her reading struggles began in kindergarten, she was not properly identified until fifth grade. She is now barely reading at a 3rd grade level due to her severe reading deficiencies. If she had received proper instruction and intervention in a timely manner she would not be so gravely behind her peers now.

Currently school districts across Connecticut are burdened with the cost of training teachers as it relates to Dyslexia and structured literacy intervention. Teachers should receive this training and instruction as part of their teacher preparation program. When school districts cannot provide this training to teachers due to budget constraints, our children do not receive the instruction needed to read on grade level and close the achievement gap. Not only does this impact our children, this ultimately ends up increasing special education costs. In some cases parents are forced to take action against the school district to get the intervention their child needs to close the achievement gap.

This legislation takes a proactive approach to addressing the root cause. Teachers need to be trained in approaches that have been scientifically proven to work effectively for literacy instruction on our toughest students. "It's never too late to identify dyslexia….but for every year after pre-kindergarten you wait, the effect of the intervention goes down by 25-50%." Dr. Fumiko Hoeft, Director, UCONN Brain imaging Research Center.

Our children need every educational opportunity to be productive members of society. There is an overwhelming need for this legislation, now.

Thank you for your support to House Bill 6517.

Beth Gardner